

simulated leatherette binder which held 309 pages of my undying dedication. I turned to the first chapter and read:

*It wasn't a pretty day in the little town. The rain pounded down upon the earth like thick globs of snot blown from the slime-green sky. Worms oozed from the murky cracks of the slippery sidewalks, only to have their jelly-like guts crushed underfoot or splattered by muddy automobile tires. The puke-like smell of wet, matted dog fur filled the air. No, it wasn't a pretty day in the little town. It wasn't a pretty day at all.*

I was sick—from rejection, of course. Perhaps my description was lacking. Maybe I spelled some words wrong. Or perhaps I left out a period somewhere.

Nonetheless, they didn't want my book—but what do publishers know? Nobody wanted *Jonathon Livingston Seagull*. Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe had to publish their own books. And wasn't *Peyton Place* rejected twelve times? By God, if rejection is a sign of greatness, then I must have written a classic!

To hell with Steinbeck, Hemingway, and Faulkner—Shakespeare, move over!

## THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS BREAK

JoAnn Gocking

On the first day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, “Oh it’s wonderful you have all this time free!”

On the second day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, “Take your jacket to the cleaners. Pick these things up at the store. And by the way, you’ll have to do your own laundry.”

On the third day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, “Take your brother to the doctor. Drop this package off at Grandma’s. Oh, and don’t forget, you’re picking up the tree.”

On the fourth day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, “Please help me bake these cookies. Did you fill the car with gas? Pick

Melinda up at school. Go meet the bus with Uncle Lee."

On the fifth day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, "Would you mind? Run the vacuum. Clean the bathroom. And please, please, turn off the damn T.V.!"

On the sixth day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, "Would you wrap this gift for Daddy? Call Aunt Liz and say we're coming. Could you drop me at the hairdresser's? Take your brother to the ballgame. And don't forget to turn the oven on at three."

On the seventh day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, "Will you help me move the sofa? Get your Grandpa some more eggnog. Help the children with their stockings. Get a present for the paper boy. Please hang these strings of popcorn on the tree."

On the eighth day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, "We need extra chairs for dinner. Could you get a quart of milk? Will you put on some Christmas music? Oh, you're sleeping on the sofa—we need your room for Aunt Marie."

On the ninth day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, "You've got to help me clean the house. Take these chairs back to Grandma's. Did you write your thank-you's yet? Could you go and shovel snow for your Aunt Bea?"

On the tenth day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, "Will you exchange this shirt for Michael? Mail that letter to your roommate. We're going to Aunt Flo's for dinner and I told Louise you'd babysit her three."

On the eleventh day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, "You mean you haven't cleaned your room yet? Why, you're going back tomorrow! Will you help the kids take down that blasted tree?"

On the last day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, "My how time has flown! Why, it seems like you just got here! It's so wonderful you had all that time free!"